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Horatius at the Bridge

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HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

BY

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EDITED WITH NOTES
AND TEACHING QUESTIONS BY

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CHICAGO

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HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

A Lay Made About the Year of the City CCCLX.

1

Lars Porsena of Clusium
 By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
 Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
 And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth
East and west and south and north,
 To summon his array.

2

East and west and south and north
 The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
 Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
 Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
 Is on the march for Rome.

1 *Lars*, a title meaning king or chieftain in the Etruscan. Clusium, in eastern middle portion of Etruria, west of Lake Trasimenus.

5 According to the Roman tradition, the great gods of the Etruscans were nine in number.

14 *Etruscan.* The Etruscans were the inhabitants of Etruria, a portion of Italy extending along the coast from near the mouth of the Tiber north to a point a little below modern Genoa. Now Tuscany.

Define: trysting, array, house as used in line 3.

Why should he be called a "false Etruscan" who did not go with Lars Porsena?

3

The horsemen and the footmen
 Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market-place;
 From many a fruitful plain;
From many a lonely hamlet,
 Which, hid by beech and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
 Of purple Apennine;

4

From lordly Volaterræ,
 Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
 For godlike kings of old;
From seagirt Populonia,
 Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain-tops
 Fringing the southern sky;

5

From the proud mart of Pisæ,
 Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's triremes
 Heavy with fair-haired slaves;

26 *Volaterrae,* a city north and west of Clusium in Etruria.
34 *Pisae,* the modern Pisa.
36 *Massilia,* now Marseilles, formerly a Greek colony. The slaves of her triremes were probably Gauls traded in by Greek merchants.

Define: amain, mart, hamlet, hold, seagirt, descry, triremes.
Why should the poet call the Apennines purple?
Why did they think that the hold was "piled by hands of giants for god-like kings of old"?

From where sweet Clanis wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

6

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
Drop in dark Auser's rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
Of the Ciminian hill;
Beyond all streams Clitumnus
Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
The great Volsinian mere.

7

But now no stroke of woodman
Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the waterfowl may dip
In the Volsinian mere.

38 *Clanis,* a river flowing east of Clusium south into the Tiber.
40 *Cortona,* a little distance from Clusium, northwest of Lake Trasimenus.
43 *Auser,* a stream flowing into the Arno.

Define: diadem, champ, fowler, mere, rill.

Does the sixth stanza make the life in Etruria seem a happy one or not? Why should the Etruscans think of this as they march away to Rome?

Why does the milk-white steer graze unwatched along Clitumnus and the waterfowl dip unharmed in the mere?

8

The harvests of Arretium,
 This year, old men shall reap;
This year, young boys in Umbro
 Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats of Luna,
 This year, the must shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
 Whose sires have marched to Rome.

9

There be thirty chosen prophets,
 The wisest of the land,
Who alway by Lars Porsena
 Both morn and evening stand:
Evening and morn the Thirty
 Have turned the verses o'er,
Traced from the right on linen white
 By mighty seers of yore.

58 *Arretium,* north of Cortona, now Arezzo.
60 *Umbro,* now the Ombrone, a river flowing into the sea north of Rome less than a hundred miles.
62 *Luna,* a city in the north of Etruria on the sea.
64 *Round the white feet of laughing girls,* who are treading out the wine from the grapes.
66 *Prophets.* They were rather sorcerers who read signs of the future in the entrails of animals and otherwise.
72 The Etruscans read from right to left instead of from left to right as we do.

Define: must, seers, yore.

Why shall the old men reap the harvests of Arretium and the young men plunge the sheep in Umbro?

Why does the poet think of the girls as laughing when their sires have marched to Rome?

10

And with one voice the Thirty
 Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
 Go forth, beloved of Heaven:
Go, and return in glory
 To Clusium's royal dome;
And hang round Nurscia's altars
 The golden shields of Rome."

11

And now hath every city
 Sent up her tale of men:
The foot are fourscore thousand,
 The horse are thousands ten.
Before the gates of Sutrium
 Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
 Upon the trysting day.

12

For all the Etruscan armies
 Were ranged beneath his eye,
And many a banished Roman,
 And many a stout ally;
And with a mighty following
 To join the muster came

80 *Nurscia's altars.* This was a Sabine city near the Nar.
86 *Sutrium,* a town north of Rome on the road from Clusium.

Define: dome, tale, ranged, banished, ally, muster.
Why was Lars Porsena a proud man on the trysting day?

The Tusculan Mamilius,
 Prince of the Latian name.

13

But by the yellow Tiber
 Was tumult and affright;
From all the spacious champaign
 To Rome men took their flight.
A mile around the city,
 The throng stopped up the ways;
A fearful sight it was to see
 Through two long nights and days.

14

For aged folks on crutches,
 And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
 That clung to them and smiled,
And sick men borne in litters
 High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sunburnt husbandmen
 With reaping-hooks and staves.

15

And droves of mules and asses
 Laden with skins of wine,

96 *Tusculan,* a resident of Tusculum, a city of Latium, that part of Italy in which Rome was situated.

Define: affright, tumult, throng, champaign, spacious, litters, reaping-hooks, staves, skins of wine, kine.

Why does the poet tell of the smiling babes at the same time that he tells of the sobbing mothers?

Where has the poet changed point of view in telling the story? Whom are we interested in now?

And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
 And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
 That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
 Choked every roaring gate.

16

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,
 Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
 Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers of the City,
 They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
 With tidings of dismay.

17

To eastward and to westward
 Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house nor fence nor dovecote
 In Crustumerium stands.
Verbenna down to Ostia
 Hath wasted all the plain;

122 *Tarpeian.* The Tarpeian Rock was a cliff on one of the hills of Rome, famous in an old story of the betrayal of the city.
126 *Fathers of the City.* The Senators of Rome.
133 *Crustumerium,* a city between fifteen and twenty miles above Rome near the Tiber.
134 *Ostia,* was the port of Rome at the mouth of the Tiber.

What are burghers? Is the term Roman or more modern?
Why was every gate a "roaring gate"?
Why does the poet speak of house and fence and dovecote in that order?

Astur hath stormed Janiculum,
And the stout guards are slain.

18

Iwis, in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold,
But sore it ached, and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told.
Forthwith up rose the Consul,
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,
And hied them to the wall.

19

They held a council standing
Before the River-Gate;
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
Out spake the Consul roundly:
"The bridge must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Naught else can save the town."

20

Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear;

136 *Janiculum.* The hill Janiculus across the river from the main part of the city. Important as overlooking Rome.
138 *Iwis.* Has the sense of certainly, surely.

Define: girded, hied, council, Consul, stormed, roundly.
Why do the Fathers hold a council before the River-Gate?
What does the scout's way of announcing the coming of Lars Porsena show of the Roman feeling for him?
Does the scout's message make the Consul excited or thoughtful? How is that or is it not like a Roman?

"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul:
 Lars Porsena is here."
On the low hills to westward
 The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
 Rise fast along the sky.

21

And nearer fast and nearer
 Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,
 The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
 Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
 The long array of spears.

22

And plainly, and more plainly
 Above that glimmering line,
Now might ye see the banners
 Of twelve fair cities shine;

177 *Twelve fair cities.* The Etruscans developed a civil life and arts somewhat in advance of the Romans, and they formed a league of twelve cities with a spirit of organization such as their future conquerors had not yet.

Define: swarthy, glimmering, proud.
Why does the poet call the coming army a red whirlwind?

But the banner of proud Clusium
 Was highest of them all,
The terror of the Umbrian,
 The terror of the Gaul.

23

And plainly and more plainly
 Now might the burghers know,
By port and vest, by horse and crest,
 Each warlike Lucumo.
There Cinlius of Arretium
 On his fleet roan was seen;
And Astur of the fourfold shield,
Girt with the brand none else may wield,
Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
 By reedy Thrasymene.

24

Fast by the royal standard,
 O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
 Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
 Prince of the Latian name;

184 *Port and vest.* Manner of carrying himself and dress (vesture).
185 *Lucumo.* A Roman term for the Etruscan chiefs.
197 *Mamilius.* Clavius Mamilius of Tusculum was of the exiled family, having married a daughter of Tarquinius.

Why was the banner of Clusium the terror of the Umbrian and the Gaul?

Give the meaning as used here of crest, roan, brand, wield, standard, car.

And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame.

25

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

26

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

27

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate;

199 *Sextus.* He was a son of Tarquinius, and the expulsion of the Tarquins was largely due to his wrongdoing.

Define: firmament, spat, curses, van.
How does it happen that even the children scream out curses? Why is the Consul's feeling different from that of the people? What is he thinking of?

"To every man upon this earth
 Death cometh soon or late
And how can man die better
 Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
 And the temples of his gods.

28

"And for the tender mother
 Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
 His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens
 Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
 That wrought the deed of shame?

29

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
 With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
 Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
 May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
 And keep the bridge with me?"

229 *The holy maidens* were the vestal virgins, whose duty it was to keep a flame burning on the altar of the goddess Vesta.

What is there fine about the first part of the speech of Horatius?

What is the meaning as used here of wrought, play, strait, either?

Are the others who will help Horatius prompt or not?

30

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

31

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

32

Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great;
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold;

242 *Ramnian.* The Roman patrician or noble class comprised three tribes, of which the Ramnes or Romans were the first. Later the union with the Sabines added another, the Tities. See line 246. The conquest of Alba added the fourth, the Luceres.

Define: abide, dauntless, portioned, spoils.
Do they who will help Horatius seem determined or doubtful? Do they seem men of words or of deeds?

The Romans were like brothers
 In the brave days of old.

33

Now Roman is to Roman
 More hateful than a foe,
And the Tribunes beard the high,
 And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
 In battle we wax cold:
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
 In the brave days of old.

34

Now while the Three were tightening
 Their harness on their backs,
The Consul was the foremost man
 To take in hand an axe:
And Fathers mixed with Commons
 Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
 And loosed the props below.

267 *The Tribunes* were officers of the common people or plebeians whose first office was that of protecting any of the plebeians who might appeal to them for protection against the authority of the Consul. Later they had also the power of vetoing laws that they thought would be injurious to the common people.

Define: foe, beard, faction, harness, smote, props.

How does the man who is telling the story seem to feel about "the brave days of old"? Why does he use the phrase so often?

What is it for the Tribunes to "beard the high," and for the "fathers to grind the low"?

What is it to "wax hot in faction"?

Why does the poet speak of Fathers as mixing with Commons? Was the term Commons one properly to be applied to a Roman or an English body of men?

35

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
 Right glorious to behold,
Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
 Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
 A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
 Where stood the dauntless Three.

36

The Three stood calm and silent,
 And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter,
 From all the vanguard rose;
And forth three chiefs came spurring
 Before that deep array;
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
 To win the narrow way.

37

Aunus from green Tifernum,
 Lord of the Hill of Vines;

301 *Tifernum*, a city in the northwestern part of Etruria.

Define: surges, ensign, vanguard, array.

Does the description of the Tuscan army in the thirty-fifth stanza seem that of an orderly modern army or of a wild host?

Why did a great shout of laughter rise from the vanguard at the Three?

And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
 Sicken in Ilva's mines;
And Picus, long to Clusium
 Vassal in peace and war,
Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that gray crag where, girt with towers,
The fortress of Nequinum lowers
 O'er the pale waves of Nar.

38

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
 Into the stream beneath:
Herminius struck at Seius,
 And clove him to the teeth:
At Picus brave Horatius
 Darted one fiery thrust;
And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
 Clashed in the bloody dust.

39

Then Ocnus of Falerii
 Rushed on the Roman Three;
And Lausulus of Urgo,
 The rover of the sea;

304 *Ilva*, an island off the west coast, the modern Elba.
310 *Nar*, a river on the southern border of Umbria flowing into the Tiber from the east. Umbria is east of Etruria.
322 The Etruscans, while they were merchantmen, also sailed the sea as pirates.

Define as used here: vassal, powers, girt, fortress, lowers, clove, crag, fiery, gilded, rover.

Does the poet make you feel that Seius and Picus are kindly or terrible chieftains? Does stanza thirty-seven make you more or less anxious for the Romans?

And Aruns of Volsinium,
Who slew the great wild boar,
The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosa's fen,
And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
Along Albinia's shore.

40

Herminius smote down Aruns;
Lartius laid Ocnus low;
Right to the heart of Lausulus
Horatius sent a blow.
"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
No more, aghast and pale,
From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's hinds shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
Thy thrice accursed sail."

41

But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamor
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' lengths from the entrance
Halted that deep array,

Define: fell, pirate, aghast, bark, hinds, cavern, clamor.

Do the new Etruscans seem more or less terrible than the preceding Three? Why?

In stanza forty is Horatius more or less determined than before? Do you see any new feeling that makes him so?

Why now does "a wild and wrathful clamor" rise from the vanguard of the foes?

And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow way.

42

But hark! the cry is Astur:
And lo! the ranks divide;
And the great Lord of Luna
Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
Which none but he can wield.

43

He smiled on those bold Romans
A smile serene and high;
He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
And scorn was in his eye.
Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter
Stand savagely at bay:
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

44

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,

360 *The she-wolf's litter.* According to the old story the founders of Rome, Romulus and Renus, were nourished by a wolf.

Define: stride, brand, wield, serene, flinching, deftly.
Does there appear to be new and greater danger for the Romans in the coming of Astur or not? Why?
Does he in any way seem nobler than the other Etruscans?

He rushed against Horatius,
 And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
 Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh;
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
 To see the red blood flow.

45

He reeled, and on Herminius
 He leaned one breathing-space;
Then, like a wild-cat mad with wounds,
 Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet,
 So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a handbreadth out
 Behind the Tuscan's head.

46

And the great Lord of Luna
 Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
 A thunder-smitten oak.
Far o'er the crashing forest
 The giant arms lie spread;

388 *Augurs,* priests whose office it was to foretell events from signs of various sorts.

Define: helm, thrust, reeled, helmet.

Does Horatius meet Astur in a way at all different from that in which he met the others?

Are the augurs pale for the falling of the oak or for the falling of Astur?

Why does the poet compare Astur to an oak?

And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

47

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"

48

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath and shame and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

49

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three;
And, from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Roman stood,

Define: tugged, haughty, challenge, dread, prowess, noblest, fatal, corpses, dauntless, ghastly.

How confident does Horatius feel in the forty-seventh stanza? Why does the poet speak of the van as glittering?

All shrank, like boys who unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
 Lies amidst bones and blood.

50

Was none who would be foremost
 To lead such dire attack:
But those behind cried "Forward!"
 And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
 Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
 Dies fitfully away.

51

Yet one man for one moment
 Stood out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
 And they gave him greeting loud,
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
 Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
 Here lies the road to Rome."

Define: unaware, hare, lair, dire, reel, trumpet-peal.

How does the fiftieth stanza show that the soldiers of the Etruscan army fought under orders from the commander or by its own impulses? Why does the poet now speak of the Etruscan army as a sea of steel when he spoke of it in stanza thirty-five as a sea of gold?

Why do the Three shout out with so loud a greeting to Sextus?

52

Thrice looked he at the city;
 Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
 And thrice turned back in dread;
And, white with fear and hatred,
 Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
 The bravest Tuscans lay.

53

But meanwhile axe and lever
 Have manfully been plied;
And now the bridge hangs tottering
 Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
 Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
 Back, ere the ruin fall!"

54

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
 Herminius darted back;
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
 They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
 And on the farther shore

Define: fury, hatred, scowled, wallowing, lever, plied, tottering, tide, boiling, ruin.

Is there any change to be noticed in the relative fears of the Romans and the Etruscans since word first reached Rome that the host of Lars Porsena was coming?

Does the taunting of the Roman Three seem mean or not? Why so?

Is the use of the word tide in line 446 strictly accurate or not?

Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

55

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

56

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
And tossed his tawny mane,
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down, in fierce career
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

Define: athwart, triumph, turret-tops, splashed, struggled, tawny, curb, career, pier.

What does the furious river struggle against in line 469?

The river is here personified, spoken of as if it were living. Can you see why the poet does that or why the people might think of it so?

What is the curb that the river bursts, and why should it seem to rejoice in being free?

57

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant still in mind;
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

58

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Naught spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus naught spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus
The white porch of his home;
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

59

"O Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,

488 *Palatinus,* now the Palatine hill.

Define as used here: yield, grace, craven, deigning, naught.
Why does Horatius remain after the bridge begins to fall?
How does the poet think of Horatius as being "constant still in mind"?
Why is Sextus anxious to have him killed now?
How does it happen that Lars Porsena has a different spirit?
How has the poet made us feel toward Lars Porsena from the beginning of the story?
How do stanzas fifty-eight and fifty-nine make you feel about the motive that Horatius has had for defending the bridge? Has it been love of battle or love of Rome?

A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
 Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
 The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back
 Plunged headlong in the tide.

60

No sound of joy or sorrow
 Was heard from either bank;
But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
 Stood gazing where he sank;
And when above the surges
 They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
 Could scarce forbear to cheer.

61

But fiercely ran the current,
 Swollen high by months of rain:
And fast his blood was flowing,
 And he was sore in pain,
And heavy with his armor,
 And spent with changing blows:
And oft they thought him sinking,
 But still again he rose.

Define: crest, rapturous, sore, spent.

Do you think that either Porsena or Sextus was among those who cheered? Why?

How would the story have lost in interest, if Horatius had gone back safely across the bridge with the other two?

62

Never, I ween, did swimmer,
In such an evil case,
Struggle through such a raging flood
Safe to the landing-place:
But his limbs were borne up bravely
By the brave heart within,
And our good father Tiber
Bore bravely up his chin.

63

'Curse on him!'' quoth false Sextus;
''Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
We should have sacked the town!''
''Heaven help him!'' quoth Lars Porsena,
''And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
Was never seen before.''

64

And now he feels the bottom;
Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping,
And noise of weeping loud,

Define: ween, sacked, gory.

How does the difference in feeling between Sextus and Porsena help our appreciation of Horatius or not?

Why do you think there was weeping after he had saved the bridge and had swum safely back?

Where does the real story stop? Why does the author plunge so abruptly into the account of the consequences without telling about the outcome of the attack on Rome?

He enters through the River-Gate,
 Borne by the joyous crowd.

65

They gave him of the corn-land,
 That was of public right,
As much as two strong oxen
 Could plough from morn till night;
And they made a molten image,
 And set it up on high,
And there it stands unto this day
 To witness if I lie.

66

It stands in the Comitium,
 Plain for all folk to see;
Horatius in his harness,
 Halting upon one knee:
And underneath is written,
 In letters all of gold,
How valiantly he kept the bridge
 In the brave days of old.

67

And still his name sounds stirring
 Unto the men of Rome,

542 *The corn land.* There were many dissensions in the course of Roman history over the occupation of the public lands which were not distributed to private owners. The patricians claimed this right alone, and the plebeians secured a share in the land with difficulty.

550 *Comitium,* the assembling place of the people in the forum. It contained the tribunal and the rostra from which latter the people were addressed.

Do you think that Porsena and the Etruscans succeeded in getting into the city or not?

As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscian home;
And wives still pray to Juno
For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well
In the brave days of old.

68

And in the nights of winter,
When the cold north-winds blow,
And the long howling of the wolves
Is heard amidst the snow;
When round the lonely cottage
Roars loud the tempest's din,
And the good logs of Algidus
Roar louder yet within;

69

When the oldest cask is opened,
And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
Around the firebrands close;
When the girls are weaving baskets,
And the lads are shaping bows;

561 *Volscians.* They were a people living directly south of Latium.
572 *Algidus,* a mountain near Rome.

Define: amidst, din, glow, kid, spit.

Do these last stanzas bring up a picture of an early or a late civilization?

What in this life appeals to the man who tells the story? Why is he fond of "the brave days of old"?

How is Horatius a typical Roman of the old days or not?

70

When the goodman mends his armor,
And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom,—
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

HORATIUS

There can be little doubt that among those parts of early Roman history which had a poetical origin was the legend of Horatius Cocles. We have several versions of the story, and these versions differ from each other in points of no small importance. Polybius, there is reason to believe, heard the tale recited over the remains of some consul or prætor descended from the old Horatian patricians; for he introduces it as a specimen of the narratives with which the Romans were in the habit of embellishing their funeral oratory. It is remarkable that, according to him, Horatius defended the bridge alone, and perished in the waters. According to the chronicles which Livy and Dionysius followed, Horatius had two companions, swam safe to shore, and was loaded with honors and rewards.

* * * * * * * *

It is by no means unlikely that there were two old Roman lays about the defence of the bridge; and that, while the story which Livy has transmitted to us was preferred by the multitude, the other, which ascribed the whole glory to Horatius alone, may have been the favorite with the Horatian house.

The following ballad is supposed to have been made about a hundred and twenty years after the war which it celebrates, and just before the taking of Rome by the Gauls. The author seems to have been an honest citizen, proud of the military glory of his country, sick of the disputes of factions, and much given to pining after good old times which had never really existed. The allusion, however, to the partial manner in which the public lands were allotted could proceed only from a plebeian; and the allusion to the fraudulent scale of spoils marks the date of the poem, and shows that the poet shared in the general discontent with which the proceedings of Camillus, after the taking of Veii, were regarded.

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